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A queen for the forest











Chapter 1 by Sonya Caron

A Queen for the Forest

Meiia

The bells rang throughout the palace announcing supper. I closed my book and ran for the dinning room. I took my usual place and smiled at my parents. I was born a princess of the court. I was heir to the throne if my parents were to die or get too old. They were still young and healthy. I was a sixteen year old princess who was to be married in four years to a man I had yet never met and would not until my wedding day. Our butler came out and the chef followed, each bringing plates that they placed symmetrically on the table.

"Today's meal consists of a chicken," he lifted the cover off the chicken plate. "Of green salad and vegetables." He lifted the cover off the salad. "And for desert, Ms. Meiia's favorite fruit cake." He lifted the cover off the cake. "Bonne appetite." And with that they bowed and left.

I smiled at the meal and jumped in. My parents smiled and went more gently to the food. Supper time was always a quiet moment for us. If we spoke, it meant the food was not good enough to keep you concentrated on its taste. The Chef always stood behind us and if we spoke he took away our plate, looking insulted. I had gone many days without supper or some other meal. Luckily, my nanny as a child would bring plates of food secretly to my room when I didn't get to eat that meal.

I smiled again after finishing off my desert, stood, bowed to my parents and headed back to my

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folks. If my parents were to find out, I would be punished badly, so instead, I changed my book cover to something that my parents agreed to.

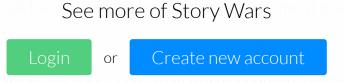
When I was only a child, around eight years old, I would play in the court yard with my nanny but one day while she was too busy with her husband, I left and picked flowers from the forest's edge. That was when I met him. He said that he was called Kanvei and that he was the prince of the forest folks. I had never met another royal so the fact that he had horns passed miles above me. I played with him all that day and when I returned home my nanny was fired for losing sight of me. Three years later, I managed to return and instead of staying at the edge, I ventured in. That was when I saw him again, he had barely changed. Except this time when I saw him, he had blood all around his mouth and was holding the corpse of a rabbit in his hands. When he saw me, he dropped the corpse and ran away. I ran after him but he managed to lose me really fast. I went back home.

The next week, I returned and saw him again but he was not holding a corpse to his lips, he was washing the dead rabbit in the river. I kept him from running away that time and we talked a bit. He explained to me why he ran the other time and what he was. I asked him to make me like him. When I said those words he started at me. I was wearing my most beautiful white dress, my chestnut curls blew against the wind as we knelt by the river in silence. He told me to meet him here day to day five years from then. He got up and ran away.

Today, I was going to meet him again at that same place. When the time came I closed my book and slid it between my mattresses and got up. I chose a gown that looked like the one I had worn that day, except that five years had changed the top, it was a corset that held onto me like a second skin. I put my black cloak around me and left in silence. I sat at the river for a few, watching the sun fall behind the trees.

"Meiia, you shouldn't have come." whispered a voice behind me.

I turned to see him. He was topless as usual, wearing only black pants the way I remembered him.



cloak behind.

Kanvei

She was pretty, I can't deny it but she was a heir to the court. I could not let her take up her word. She wanted to be like me, I simply couldn't do it so I brought her to my mother who would try and coax her out of it by telling her the scary part: the blood. I was a forest heir prince. She was a court princess. The fact that she came after so many years and remembered where, worried me. How would she REALLY take it?

"Mother," I said as I walked in and bowed to my mother. "This is the princess I told you of – Meiia."

She smiled and gracefully curtseyed to my mother. It surprised me a lot.

"Princess, step forward please," asked my mother. She was beautiful in her young age. Her raven black hair and black eyes a deep contrast to her white skin. Our women always seemed to show off their white skin more with their long hair but Meiia did a similar job with lighter hair and darker skin.

Meiia stepped forward and I knelt where I stood. My mother reached out to her and turned her around, examining her.

"Why do you wish to join us, Princess?" she asked her.

Meiia glanced back at me for a moment before returning her beautiful green eyes to my mother.

"My parents want to 'exchange' me. I do not want to be there when they manage to sell me. They say I will marry, but I heard them speak in their suite." She stood and looked strong as she said those words. It surprised me because she had always looked so happy. "My mother is

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"Little Princess, I cannot just make you ours. You have to make yourself part of us." my mother explained to her.

I knelt there and wondered why she was trying to make her one of us instead of what I had asked.

"When I met Kanvei the first time I was fascinated by him. Not by his horns, or his eyes or his skin. Just by him. The years went by and not once I forgot that image I had of him and not once did I forget where we were to meet and when. I counted the days left until today." Meiia explained to my mother before turning to smile at me.

"Would I be wrong in saying that—" my mother looked at me kneeling there. "Do you not have something to do, Kanvei?" she asked me.

I stood, bowed and turned and left. I stood outside the door for a moment listening.

"Pardon that. Would I be wrong in saying that you love my son?" my mother asked her.

There was a silence before I heard Meiia's sweet and soft voice reply.

"It would be right."

I headed to my room where I took out the book in which I drew. I turned the pages, watching each one closely. I had drawn ever since I was a child, before I met Meiia, but when I met her, she had been all I could think of and so my drawing book was filled with drawings of her. Most included that white dress she had worn. But the white gown she wore today was even more striking.

A knock on my door made me jump and I put my drawing book away before going to open the door. It was my mother and Meiia was not with her.

"Kanvei, have you drawn any new drawing of her?" She asked me.

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"Do you doubt of me, son?"

"Never, mother." I bowed to her. "I am simply curious, I do not want her to be cursed."

"Prince, she can undo your curse if you wish it that way. Or she can be with us yet not." she explained.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you could be cured by that sweet child, she could become one of us, or you two could end the court and forest folks war. That is only if you love her."

I turned my head to where my drawing book was and said the only thing I could think of.

"I cannot say how I feel for her. I want her safe."

Meiia

After speaking with Kanvei's mother she called up a guard and sent me home. A guard was going to be waiting for me at sunset at the forest's edge. I was running from court. She had offered me to stay a year with them before deciding exactly what I wanted.

When I walked into my room my mother was there holding my book with a smile. She looked up at me and I saw that a tear was sliding down her cheek.

"Your husband wants you earlier, beautiful." she whispered.

"No." I replied, standing in the doorway.

She stared at me, the smile was gone.

"Are you disobeying a direct order?" she asked getting angry.

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"I won't be on my own, Mother." I turned to face her. "I'll love unlike you."

I kept stuffing my bags until they were as full as I could make them. I put them beside the door, took my book from my mother's hand, took the bags back and headed to the library. I heard her follow me.

"I will not let you leave, Meiia. Your husband will have you even if you run."

I turned in anger, and saw her take a step back, almost falling as she stepped on her dress. A small smirk crept up to my face.

"What? Will you set the guards after me? You know that if you do, its not here they'll bring me, its to the cells. Would you want to see your daughter chained to a rock wall behind a cell door?" I asked and before she could answer lifted my dress and ran to the library.

I sat down and finished reading my book, watching the windows as I awaited the moment to leave.

"I heard you were planning a run-away?" whispered a female voice behind me.

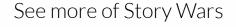
I smiled knowing it was Snow.

"Yes, and no one will or can stop me. I'm sorry to have to leave you behind, Snow."

She came to sit in front of me, careful not to step on her dress. Snow was an orphan I had found playing in our yard when I was a child. We had played together the times I hadn't gone to see Kanvei and since then, my parents had let her live with us.

"I wish you wouldn't leave, though." She laid her head down on the table. "Without you I have no reason to be here."

"My parents will need a babysitter once the kid is born."



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"Yes, Mei. I knew. They told me they were selling you. Its why I'm not going to keep you from leaving."

I looked at her and she seemed so honest. Her blue eyes glittered with unshed tears. I got up and hugged her tightly.

"Its time to part now, Snow. I'll come back for you in five years. Don't forget me." I gave her a kiss on the cheek and left the library without looking back.

Kanvei

I was drawing in the study room when I heard noise from outside. I stood and looked out the window to where all the villagers were crowded. Through the crowd I managed to get a peek of an ivory dress and I knew it was Meiia. I kept looking as a few guards ran over to make way for her. She was fine, the villagers were simply in awe at seeing a person from court not here to kill us. I left the window and ran to the doors where my mother what already standing.

"Why is she back?" I asked.

"She is going to be staying with us for a year. Then, she will decide whether she wishes to remain amongst us." she answered me, so sure of herself. "The forest needs a worthy Queen."

I stared at her and watched as a smile spread on her face as the doors opened and the guards took steps aside before closing the door again, finally revealing the beautiful Meiia. She smiled and curtsied to us. My mother reached out for her hand and led her away. All I was allotted was a smile directed directly at me from Meiia.

I followed them silently as my mother led her to the room she would be having. As we crossed a servant my mother told her to get the room ready with Meiia's things, handing her Meiia's bags and turning towards me.

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drawing book and she took notice of it very fast. She looked at the picture, examining it carefully.

I had drawn her the way she had been sitting on the river's edge, her eyes following the last sight of the river, gloved hands in her lap.

"Wow, such detail. You drew this?" she asked turning towards me.

I blushed a little since it was her I had drawn, I nodded hoping she wouldn't want to look at the rest of the sketch book.

She smiled and turned her eyes back to the drawing.

"It looks so real. Almost as if any moment she'll turn her head to look at you." she closed the book and handed it to me. "You're such an artist. I wouldn't want to ruin the art by being nosy."

"Thank you," was all I could find to say.

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